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*Although the Warsaw Pact and its forces may appear to be a formidable, monolithic war machine, when faced with a situation other than invading Western Europe, the Pact may be less than the sum of its parts.*

# WARSAW PACT: JUGGERNAUT OR PAPER TIGER?

BY CAPT. STEVE F. KIME, USN

**T**HE danger to Western Europe is clear to anyone who bothers to count the forces arrayed against it. Because of this, there is a tendency in the West to become preoccupied with NATO cohesiveness. Sometimes it appears as if political and economic differences and cumbersome decision-making processes render NATO impotent in the presence of an enemy coalition that is better organized and strongly united. This is, of course, not entirely true. The truth is that, while NATO has its problems, it remains a formidable alliance. Is the Warsaw Pact, in fact, as strong an alliance as NATO? The answer seems to depend on the nature of the conflict in which the two alliances might engage.

In both NATO and the Warsaw Pact there is an intercontinental nuclear superpower. The US has served as the conventional catalyst and the nuclear bulwark of NATO, while the USSR provides the bulk of conventional military power in Eastern Europe and all of the nuclear striking power. The political and doctrinal roles of the two superpowers in their respective alliances are also quite different; the US is a senior partner, but the USSR thoroughly dominates the Warsaw Pact. This domination undoubtedly yields coherence and strength but, hidden behind the peacetime facade of the Soviet monolith, there may also be fragility and weakness. In the past, the diversity and flabbiness of democracies have been converted into awesome strength in conflict, while the opposite has happened to their totalitarian attackers. In spite of appearances in peacetime, NATO

may be better able to conduct coalition warfare than the Warsaw Pact.

## Doctrine and Geopolitics

The US contribution to NATO does not always yield support for US policies. We can't dictate the levels of military budgets in NATO or always have our way in matters of readiness and force posture. We are, after all, a long distance from Europe. History, economics, politics, and the global relevance of intercontinental nuclear power all make the US somewhat "European," but geography does not. Soviet power, buttressed by Soviet doctrine, permeates the neighbors of the Soviet Union on the Eurasian land mass. Thus, there is a fundamental geopolitical asymmetry in the relationships between the two superpowers and their respective military alliances. The fact that the US is in important respects an "artificial" European power has long plagued NATO strategy. There are also doctrinal implications of the other superpower's position astride the Eurasian land mass.

The Warsaw Pact serves both peacetime and wartime purposes and answers Soviet security concerns in both offensive and defensive ways. Eastern Europe is a vital economic, political, and territorial buffer zone for a Russia that has historically sought to insulate itself from Western ideas and Western power. It is, at the same time, the launching pad for a crushing offensive against the West if war should break out.

In peacetime, or at least in times short of a major East-West conflict, Soviet military power is the key ingredient in a Soviet formula for dominating East European affairs. The Warsaw Pact's personnel, decision-making machinery, and force dispositions are used by the Soviet leadership to manage East Europe's political, economic, and social intercourse with both East and West.

In a war with the West, Soviet doctrine seeks to win by carrying the battle swiftly and decisively to the enemy. Familiar Soviet doctrinal tenets such as surprise, high mobility, and mass dictate the disposition of force at the periphery of the Soviet empire. There would be no time to cope with reluctant allies: their forces must be so integrated and disposed that their only viable option in a major East-West war would be to move westward and, like the USSR, spare their own homelands as much as possible from the brunt of battle. In both peacetime and war, Soviet leaders have judged that the best Warsaw Pact doctrine and posture are based on the principle that "the best defense is a good offense."

## Doctrine and Reliability

The Soviets also do not always get their way. Sometimes Soviet leaders must tolerate a significant degree of deviation, and occasionally they suffer outright insolvency, but raw Soviet power is kept close by in case it is necessary to enforce Soviet will over deviant Pact members. It is not just NATO that keeps Soviet divisions at the ready in Eastern Europe.

The Warsaw Pact does not exist merely to oppose NATO. It is a necessary instrument of Soviet control in Eastern Europe. Soviet forces on the territories of Pact states are, in one sense, like MVD troops in the Soviet Union itself. It should be no surprise that a country that

maintains hundreds of thousands of internal troops to control its own population would take care to maintain the capacity to control the peoples of a vital buffer area.

It is not sufficient to ask whether East European populations and armies are "loyal" to the USSR, or even whether they would be reliable in conflict. Anyone familiar with East European politics knows that historical enmities, cultural differences, and the simple urges for freedom of expression militate against loyalty between states and between nationalities. True loyalty to the USSR could not be a realistic hope for the Soviet leadership, except perhaps from the traditionally pro-Russian Bulgarians. However, predictability of behavior, or reliability in a given combat situation, is a different thing than loyalty. Power and circumstances, or the "correlation of forces" at a given time, can critically affect reliability.

We cannot know how reliable the Warsaw Pact would be in war. Of perhaps greater importance is that the Soviet leadership cannot judge the Pact's reliability with any certainty either. They must consider the facts of peacetime relationships and the ability of the USSR to predetermine wartime events and attitudes through military doctrine and posture before arriving at any judgment of Pact cohesion in conflict. The loyalty of Poles, East Germans, Hungarians and Czechs—not to mention Ukrainians, the Baltic peoples, and others—might well depend on circumstances that evolve on the battlefield, and where the battlefield is.

### Where Is the Battlefield?

History has shown that Soviet troops will intervene in East European affairs when the security of the Soviet Union or the survival of single-party rule are threatened. So far they have prevailed easily, but so far the assistance of "fraternal" troops has not been absolutely necessary and Soviet troops have not had significant resistance from members of East European armed forces.

This is not just because the Soviets have been lucky. Luck is the residue of design. Having forces in place and being willing to act decisively when negotiations and cajolery fail have helped. But the Soviet leadership has good reasons for fearing that Soviet troops could be faced with massive, possibly unmanageable, resistance in some future intervention.

East European officer corps are thoroughly indoctrinated in Soviet concepts and doctrine and are highly integrated into a political and military command approved and nurtured by the Soviet Union, but they cannot be counted on as reliable partners in Soviet invasions of their homelands. Even if they could be trusted, it would be reckless for a Soviet leadership to expect the conscripted troops of invaded nations to fire upon their brothers and sisters. If the battlefield is in Eastern Europe, Soviet soldiers might have to fight alone. There is no Warsaw Pact "doctrine" for internecine conflict in Eastern Europe. It would not be politically or militarily feasible to have such a doctrine.

If ever the USSR chooses, for example, to invade Poland, it must do so outside the parameters of Warsaw Pact military doctrine, because that doctrine envisions only a coordinated, massive offensive toward a bat-

tlefield in Western Europe. Soviet decision-makers know that, if they invade Poland, Warsaw Pact doctrine and capabilities enter a state of suspended animation. Soviet military power could probably prevail on any battlefield inside the "alliance," but the price in terms of Soviet ability to cope with major East-West conflict could be enormous.

### A No-Option Environment

Soviet leaders probably could not whip up East European enthusiasm for a premeditated, unprovoked attack on the West. They would surely be unenthusiastic about volunteering their homelands as the transit zone and potential battlefield in the service of Soviet expansionism. Given a choice, East Europeans would most likely choose not to fight, or might choose to fight the Russians. Soviet strategists are aware of these facts of life and understand that their problem is to structure the politico-military environment in such a way that no real choice is left to non-Soviet Warsaw Pact nations.

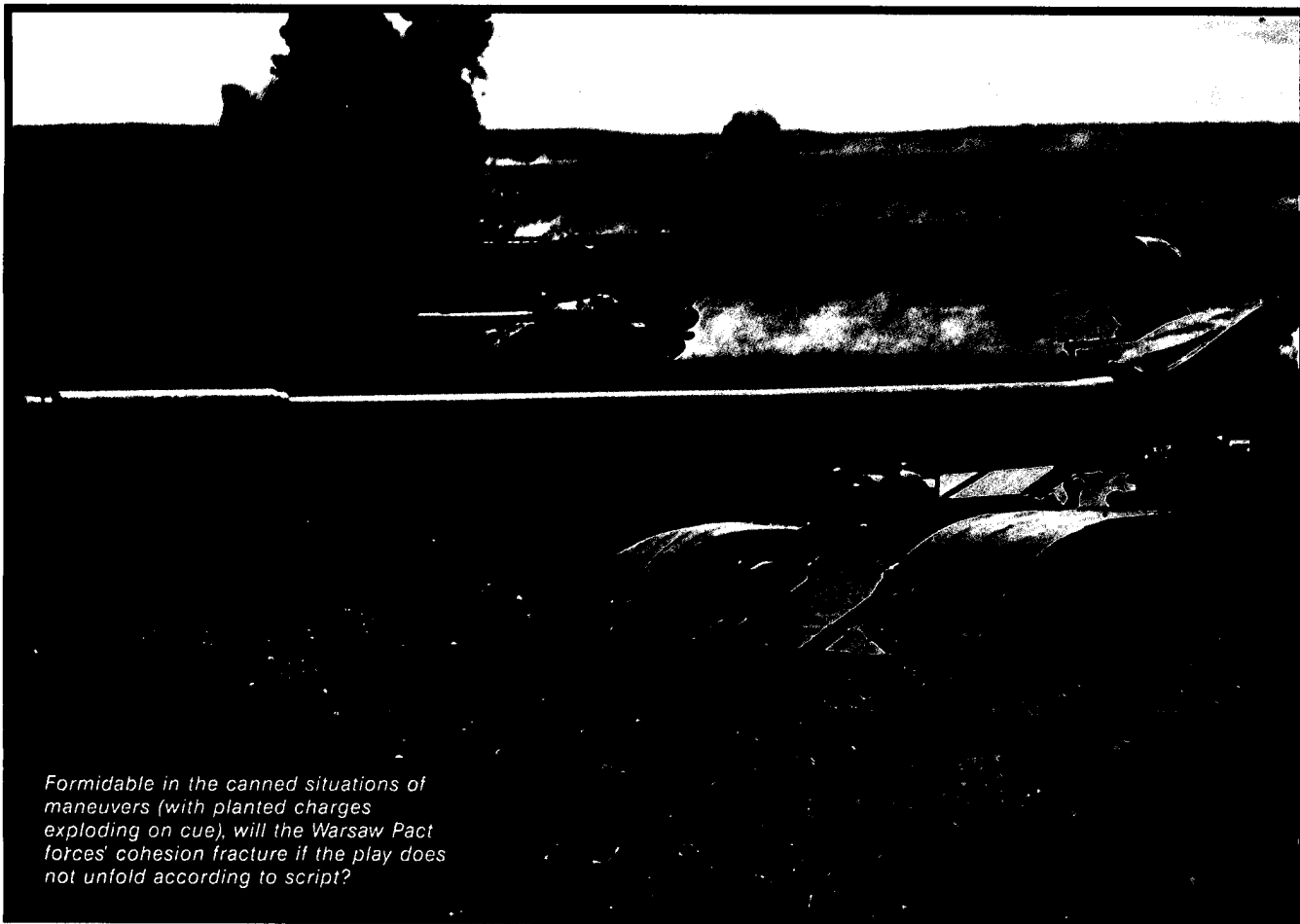
Soviet military doctrine and force dispositions in East Europe call for a massive, rapid offensive onto West European terrain. This doctrine and posture makes sense in the light of Russian and Soviet history, justifies forces for dominating Eastern Europe in peacetime, and, perhaps most important of all, serves to ensure the reliability of non-Soviet Warsaw Pact forces in a major war with NATO. Poles, East Germans, Hungarians, and Czechs have no real alternative to at least going through the motions of supporting the Soviet-led offensive westward.

Twenty Soviet divisions in East Germany, two in Poland, four in Hungary, and five in Czechoslovakia, backed up by awesome support from Soviet territory and controlled by a highly integrated command and control system in the hands of the Soviet high command, would create a no-option military environment for non-Soviet Warsaw Pact forces. They would be sucked into the "slipstream" of a massive military machine gathering momentum as it moved westward. So long as that machine worked, East Europeans would be put in a position where they would be serving their country ill if they did not go along.

But it is not only Eastern Europeans whose options are limited by Warsaw Pact doctrine and posture. The USSR itself is a prisoner of its policies. Indeed, a highly coordinated, massive offensive westward may be the *only* viable strategy for the Soviet Union to use against the West. There is a "house of cards" aspect to Soviet strategy for war against NATO. What if the massive military machine does not work? What if it works ini-

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*Formidable in the canned situations of maneuvers (with planted charges exploding on cue), will the Warsaw Pact forces' cohesion fracture if the play does not unfold according to script?*

tially but bogs down in an unexpectedly long and slow ground campaign or in the chaos of a nuclear battlefield? It may be that, while a Warsaw Pact offensive on the ground into Western Europe has high prospects for success, any failure would be absolutely cataclysmic for the Soviet Union. The margin for error is probably very small.

While it is probably true that East Europeans will have little choice but to join a successful westward drive, there would be much less reason for them to maintain support for a stalled Soviet military machine. Soviet military doctrine and posture are designed to eliminate choice for non-Soviet Warsaw Pact forces, but a stalled offensive would present options for disrupting rather than supporting the offensive. It would be tempting for national patriots in East Europe to seize the opportunity to rid themselves of the Soviet yoke.

These considerations generate disturbing characteristics for Soviet military doctrine. Not only do we find the familiar Soviet preferences for surprise and massive forces, we find plans for an offensive that cannot afford to shift to defense. We are faced with a potential enemy who can escalate to wider conflict but cannot retreat and may even have problems de-escalating. Even in the initial phases of East-West conflict, our opponent may have no viable lower-level options.

### Conclusion

The Warsaw Pact is extremely well-organized and equipped to carry out a massive offensive against

NATO. The problem for Warsaw Pact strategists (*i.e.*, the Soviet High Command) is not the prospect of conflict with NATO, awesome as that prospect is. That conflict can be prepared for. In a major East-West confrontation, at least initially and during a successful offensive, Pact allies have little choice but to provide their share of the resources to carry out the provisions of the doctrine, and the Soviets easily dominate the planning and command structures. If it is an all-out war, NATO had better be prepared for the juggernaut.

Soviet leaders and strategists can take little comfort in this positive assessment of the Warsaw Pact, because it applies only in peacetime and during the successful conduct of a major war that the Soviet Union would surely rather avoid. For all its power and apparent unity of purpose in peacetime, the Warsaw Pact is a fragile, brittle alliance. The USSR cannot count on much help from its allies in adversity, and might even find itself fighting erstwhile allies at the worst possible time—if NATO appears to be gaining the upper hand.

In NATO, we always appear to be in some disarray. Our problems tend to be visible. In conflict our peacetime problems will probably not be very relevant, and they may simply go away. In peacetime, the Warsaw Pact presents a facade of unity and integration of forces, doctrine, and policy. But it is a unity rooted in uncontested Soviet power and suppression of national wills.

In a crisis within the Pact, or if the juggernaut is stalled, NATO might discover that the Warsaw Pact is a paper tiger. ■

For years a key part of Soviet nuclear war strategy has included plans for survival of its leadership and industrial work force. Now the United States is considering revitalizing its efforts to protect the people against a nuclear attack amid growing skepticism that there is need for . . .



# CIVIL DEFENSE IN A NUCLEAR WAR

BY EDGAR ULSAMER, SENIOR EDITOR (POLICY & TECHNOLOGY)

**W**ESTERN morality and emotions suggest that the cataclysmic consequences of nuclear war make the very act of provoking such a war unthinkable. But in Moscow, nuclear war is seen as unthinkable only if it is unwinnable. It can be argued that US failure to develop the forces, capabilities, and national will needed to convince the Soviet Union of the impossibility of "winning"—however the occupants of the Kremlin may define that term—creates deterrence in only one direction, toward US self-deterrence, while providing the USSR with the incentive to think the unthinkable.

There is, of course, no sound substitute for effective deterrence of strategic nuclear war, whether viewed from a purely moral or purely military perspective, for all-out nuclear war between the superpowers is likely to result in only a relative, technical distinction between winner and loser. That would be the ability of one superpower to recover and reconstitute its residual forces ahead of the antagonist and thereby achieve politico-military victory—albeit by a precariously narrow margin.

There is evidence also—at least in the theoretical world of nuclear war-gaming—that such a conflict could be terminated while still in a limited counterforce (confined to military targets) phase, if one side can demonstrate convincingly after an initial exchange that it is ahead of the other and that continuation would needlessly worsen the loser's fate, without prospect of reversing the outcome. While the chances for "limited" nuclear war between the superpowers may be tenuous at best, the makeup and growth of Soviet strategic forces—and the military doctrines that shape them—leave no

room to doubt that the USSR is allowing for such an eventuality, while at the same time building up the means to fight nuclear war flexibly, even on an all-out, protracted basis.

One of the most serious faults of US popular thinking on the adequacy of this country's strategic nuclear forces is the notion that their effectiveness can be gauged by the amount of awe they generate among Western theoreticians and homegrown peace movements. Unfortunately, the calculus of a credible US deterrent is framed in Moscow, not on American pulpits or campuses. As a consequence, the determination of what is not enough, what is enough, and what is overkill turns on sound military judgment amplified by keen psychoanalysis of Soviet decision-makers.

One of the most puzzling elements of the nuclear equation is what role, if any, civil defense should play and, perhaps more fundamentally, if civil defense in a society lacking the docility and totalitarianism of Soviet Russia is even feasible. Since deterrence is at least as much a matter of Soviet perception of US capabilities as it is of the actual effectiveness of these capabilities, a second set of questions might hinge on whether the USSR would take seriously an energetic buildup of the US civil defense apparatus.

Advocates of greater investments in civil defense—including high Administration officials—believe that millions of American lives can be saved in case of nuclear war through stepped-up CD programs. Critics of this approach generally are inclined to treat CD as ineffective in case of a broad nuclear attack on the US, but admit that such measures could reduce casualties signif-



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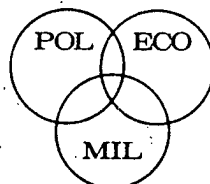


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## Comparative Strategy

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### The Soviet View of War

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**Abstract** For the peoples of the Soviet Union, war is a very real possibility. They live on past battlefields and realize that, in the event of another major war, their country will be a battlefield once again. Consequently, theoretical constructs designed primarily for maintaining the peace rather than dominating the battlefield do not satisfy their desire for a strong defense. Unlike many Western military analysts, who focus on how a war might begin, Soviet strategists are more concerned with examining how it would end. This does not mean they neglect the political side of military power; rather, it merely reflects their conviction that the political utility of military power is a function of its combat effectiveness.

How do Soviet policy-makers, and the Soviet populace, perceive war? This question is not asked often enough in the West, perhaps because there is no simple "answer." Westerners have difficulty understanding Soviet affairs in general and even Soviet policy-makers would not agree on every aspect of the role of conflict. Soviet citizens would also vary in their experiences and attitudes. But the question deserves attention in the West because, first, the range of differences in attitudes toward war is not as great in the Soviet Union as in the United States and, second, the Soviet view of war is different from the American view of war.

National security concerns are prominent in the consciousness of the Soviet citizenry. War has firsthand meaning for many of them. For those too young to remember, there is a thoroughgoing effort to keep them aware of the danger and horrors of war.<sup>1</sup> The physical security of the homeland is not, for the Soviet citizen, a matter that might in crisis become an immediate problem. It is always an immediate problem.

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Undoubtedly some Soviets would rather make more butter and build less guns and, for some, there could never be enough guns. But the vast majority of the population appears to support the policies of current leaders. Those policies reflect a very high priority on building and maintaining military power.

For the peoples of the Soviet Union, war is a very real possibility. They live on past battlefields and a future war of any magnitude will probably be visited upon them in spite of their desire to avoid it. Theoretical constructs based upon imponderables like "mutual destruction" and aimed more at the maintenance of peace than at dominating the battlefield do not fulfill the Soviet citizen's perceived need for a strong national defense. Americans have a history of delaying hard military posture decisions until confronted with war. They then place their impressive economic and technological machinery in gear and go abroad to smash the enemy. Russians have never had the luxury of viewing conflict in this rather detached way. Perhaps Americans in the nuclear age do not enjoy it any more either, but our attitudes do not yet reflect the new realities. In the Soviet perception, the possibility of war is a persistent reality.

This essay will address the conceptual and practical aspects of the Soviet view of war. It will begin with a quick review of attitudes in Russia and the Soviet Union toward military power. The tenets and predilections that have evolved in Soviet military thought will then be addressed.

A caveat is in order before proceeding. No one, not even a Soviet citizen, could "prove" his view of the way that the Soviets perceive war. We are dealing with a vast multinational state and a political system not known for the free flow of ideas and information. What follows is the attempt of a single observer of Soviet affairs to report what he has detected about Soviet perceptions of war over several years of study and considerable travel in the country. Hundreds of Soviet citizens from all over the country have been engaged in discussion, and most of the literature available to Westerners has been read. Still, many Western commentators and analysts and many in the Soviet Union would disagree with my perceptions of the way the Soviets view war in the nuclear age. After all, my perceptions, like those of any mythical average Soviet citizen, are in the eye of the beholder.

### Attitudes toward Military Power

The Bolsheviks in 1917 inherited a rich military tradition. The Bolshevik state was created in the chaos of war, and military power has been basic to Soviet rule. Previous history and firsthand experience with war both weigh heavily on the Soviet system.

Western commentators frequently note that Russia was invaded several times and that the Russian people often bore the scourge of war.<sup>2</sup> Less noted, but also true, is the fact that Russians themselves often resorted to force of arms, and that the expansion of Russian power was often by means of the sword. Martial values were predominant ones at several important junctures of Russian history. A tradition of wearing uniforms and developing weaponry was established.

Traditional insecurity produced by invasions of Mongols, Poles, Swedes, French, and Germans, and pride in great Russian campaigners like Kutuzov and Suvorov, made Russians more receptive to a positive role for the military in society. The roots of a deep sense of inferiority with respect to the "outside" world were firmly imbedded in the Russian psyche, a siege mentality evolved, and a millennium of Russian history testified that any outward projections of Russian influence were possible only from a position of military strength. Even if the new leadership did not understand and value this heritage, it was there.

Certainly the new Bolshevik regime did not plan to make military power one of the linchpins of domestic rule and the most effective element in its foreign policy. There is little evidence that Lenin and his cohorts planned to use the military to help them maintain power once it was won. Their attitudes toward the Russian military were simplistic ones. Disaffected army and naval units could be used to help spark the Revolution, the war had to be stopped even at enormous costs to Russia and Russian security, and the armed forces with their imperial rank structure and noble officers could simply "wither away" as revolution spread westward. Reality quickly descended upon the new regime in military affairs as in all the other aspects of maintaining power in a vast land.

It soon became evident that military force would be integral to Soviet rule. Civil war, foreign military intervention, economic chaos and famine, and persistent and militant internal political opposition called



for effective force. As Leninism, with its built-in tendency to concentrate power at the top, produced a one-party dictatorship in Russia, the military became a vital element of Communist Party rule.

The very legitimacy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union became inextricably intertwined with the achievements of Soviet military power. The regime came to power in a beaten Russia. The Party can and does take credit for the fact that the Soviet Union has become one of two intercontinental nuclear superpowers in the world today. To get there, enormous sacrifices have been made, but the Soviet citizenry does not blame these sacrifices on the Party leadership. From an internal Soviet point of view, the history of the last six decades has been a case of the people, the military, and the Party acting as one to surmount incredible obstacles and emerge victorious.

Westerners should never underestimate the importance of the fact that Soviet military power is the primary medium in which patriotism and the Soviet form of rule are mixed.<sup>3</sup> It is not political, social, ideological, or economic development that the Soviet system can point to with pride. The Soviet citizen notes some progress occasionally in these realms, but he is increasingly aware that, as it has always been, things are better "outside." Perhaps the USSR lags behind, maybe she always will, but she will not be weak because there is a national preoccupation with her physical security and power. Militarily, the Soviet Union is a world power. The Party's role as the developer, promoter, and guardian of Soviet power is one of its primary claims to support from the population.

It is no surprise, given the experiences and attitudes noted above, that military instruments command first claim on Soviet resources,<sup>4</sup> that one often hears about the "militarization of Soviet society," and that Soviet foreign policy is heavily infused with military elements. All of this flows from a broad consensus about the primacy of power in human relationships in general and the positive role of military power in particular.

When Western commentators and analysts claim that Soviet military production is far beyond the needs of Soviet defense, they are correct—but only from a Western perspective. Soviet military production is unfortunately a very real problem for Western strategists and planners, but what is "enough" military power must and will be determined by Soviet views.<sup>5</sup> As long as those views are dominated by a sense, though exaggerated, of military threat to the homeland and a

feeling of impotence or at least inadequacy in all the other elements of power, the Soviet military will project by its policies and its hardware a massive and threatening image.

### Politics and War

It is not necessary to present here a taxonomy of the various categories in which Marxism-Leninism and Soviet policy-makers have placed various levels and types of armed conflict. This has been done very well elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> and a lengthy review would not help much to shed light on how the Soviets perceive war in the nuclear age. Suffice it to say that, in the Soviet view, war can be classified according to a political judgment about its nature (it is either "just" or "unjust"), by the class character of the belligerents, by the size of the conflict, or by the means (nuclear or non-nuclear) employed.<sup>7</sup> These broad categories are mentioned because they reflect something fundamental about Soviet notions of conflict: politics, economics, and hardware are fused in official Soviet attitudes toward war.

Peace and war exist on a continuum, as Clausewitz would have had it, but international conflict relationships are far more complex than is suggested by the simple dictum that "war is the continuation of politics by other means."<sup>8</sup> Instruments of war in peacetime, even in the nuclear age, are part of the eternal political, social, and economic struggle between rival systems. The Soviets understand the political significance of military superiority short of conflict. In war, at whatever levels of conflict, the political, social, and economic struggle continues and has some impact on the outcome. Stripped of their rhetoric, Soviet pronouncements on politico-military relationships boil down to the proposition that war is politics, but politics is war, too.

There is, therefore, a clear Soviet understanding of the political utility of nuclear superpower status and of a global perception of Soviet momentum in all types of weaponry.<sup>9</sup> But in adjusting to the realities of the nuclear age, the Soviets have carefully categorized wars and conducted themselves in ways that maximize Soviet opportunity for expansion of influence and minimize the risk of escalation to war on Soviet soil. "Wars of National Liberation," for example, have been relegated to lower, safer levels of conflict. Soviet superpower status is applied, but limited.

Soviet leaders clearly wish to be involved in, and to profit from, the change that is inevitable in the underdeveloped world. Soviet citizens take some pride from events where their country, a global superpower, has acted to effect change in the "right" direction. But Soviet opportunism in the Third World must not endanger the homeland. If faced with the threat of opposition, especially if the stakes involved include potential superpower confrontation, Soviet decision-makers are likely not to be adventurous. Projection of Soviet power into the Third World is desirable, but this effort is to be kept in the realm of politics, even if Soviet military hardware and advisers are brought to bear. Direct involvement of Soviet troops in distant wars has been avoided.

The Soviet calculus of risk versus opportunity in Third-World conflicts continues to depend on the politics of the intercontinental nuclear relationship, because Soviet leaders have no intention of placing the homeland at risk for some Third-World adventure. It remains to be seen whether Soviet willingness to support clients in Angola and Ethiopia—and to introduce their own forces into Afghanistan—was a product of a changed Soviet calculation of risk due to perceived shifts in the strategic military balance. If so, it is an important development in the Soviet view of the relationship between politics and war, because it means that Soviet power is perceived in the USSR as sufficient to ensure peace at home while pursuing Soviet policy with military force abroad. Such a sense of security about the projection of Soviet military power has never existed in the past.

### Hardware and Politics

In the Soviet perception, one must be careful not to confuse the political aspects of military power with the demands of actual conflict. Politics, economics, and military power come together at the level of *doctrine*, the highest conceptual level in the Soviet hierarchy of military thought.<sup>10</sup> In the Soviet system, doctrinal consensus is embodied at the highest level before military strategy is formulated and military forces are planned. Military strategy and planning are therefore subordinate to military doctrine and theoretically subject to the broadest possible political and economic interpretations. This would put the Soviet military at the mercy of the whim of the politician and the economist, if it were not for the fact that there is a clearly prevalent and universal

attitude that the success, and even the survival, of the Soviet Union depends on massive Soviet military power.

The Soviet view of war is thus a very "political" one, but it emanates from a simple and practical attitude toward military hardware. Political notions based on military power are not really the concern of the military man. In any case, such notions must flow from the ability to fight effectively. No Soviet military officer would be assigned "deterrence" as his primary mission. His task is to be able to fight and to win. Deterrence, if it flows from military capabilities and the broader political and economic context of international affairs, is the business of the political leadership.

Thus, the Soviets do not choose between deterrence and war-fighting. Though Western discussion seems to suggest that the Soviets must accept one or the other, the Soviets understand both. War and military forces remain "instruments of politics" in the nuclear age in spite of the fact that the "scale" and "depth" of nuclear war have caused changes in the relationship between war and politics. But a keen eye is kept on the difference between theoretical concepts, the political impact of the *nonuse* of force, and the requirements for the actual conduct of war. The Soviets clearly have grasped the fact that the *prospect* of war in the nuclear age has political significance, but this has not permitted the peacetime configuration of Soviet military posture to become the playing of academics and politicians.<sup>11</sup>

These considerations do not apply only to nuclear weapons. There might well be a nuclear phase in any major conflict, and the use of nuclear weapons will probably be the decisive act in the war. Still, there is no Soviet tendency to make a fetish of nuclear weaponry. In the Soviet view, nuclear weapons are necessary but not necessarily sufficient. Conventional military forces must be adequate to ensure and consolidate final victory. On the Eurasian landmass this means clear superiority over any potential opponent.

### Doctrinal Tenets and Predilections

If there is a war, the Soviet view is that a nation must be able to fight and win. Survival and victory must be assumed possible, even if it is difficult to define or envision "victory" in the nuclear age. There is no time to prepare for conflict after the crisis begins. Forces must be built in

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peacetime even if that displeases or spurs on the potential adversary.<sup>12</sup> Military security comes first. If it is impossible to be sure what constitutes adequate preparation, it is necessary to have as much as possible. In spite of the costs in terms of consumer goods, for most Russians "too much" will never be quite "enough."

Victory has a distinct continental focus. "Who controls postwar Eurasia?" is the question. How to minimize damage to the homeland and retain the initiative on the ground required to dominate the Eurasian landmass are the chief concerns, whether or not the war is an intercontinental nuclear one. Military hardware is developed with these combat objectives in mind. "Punishing" the enemy is not a useful end in itself. To consent tacitly with the potential enemy to maintain forces which would simply ensure that both superpowers are totally destroyed in a major conflict would be to confuse politics with the requirements of combat. The Russian mind understands "mutual assured destruction" (MAD) for its political utility: it is simply not good military strategy.

Forces for *dominating* potential land conflict in Eastern Europe and on the Chinese border are nearly inviolate in the Soviet mind. Germans and Chinese of any political stripe bear watching at all times. Disposition of forces at the periphery of the USSR, in mass sufficient to go on the offensive and structured so as to be quickly reinforceable, is a necessity. The Soviets perceive that, if nuclear weapons are employed, the distinctions between front lines and rear areas might become academic,<sup>13</sup> but if war erupts they intend to move the battlefield away from their own periphery, if possible. The enemy will not be given the choice of moving the battlefield to Soviet soil with impunity again. Whether with conventional or nuclear weaponry, or both, the Soviets intend to attack the territory of the adversary.

Surprise, initiative, shock, and the momentum of a massive, well-coordinated offensive clearly dominate Soviet concepts of theater conflict. Whether the conflict is nuclear or not, Soviet forces will assume an offensive posture. Nuclear weapons will probably be used at some point, and this will change the character of the conflict and probably be decisive, but it will not remove the need for a combined force effort with an offensive orientation.<sup>14</sup>

The Soviet emphasis on surprise and initiative in theater military strategy has worrisome implications for Soviet intercontinental nuclear strategy. Some Western analysts imply that Soviet intent to use overt

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attack is indicated by these propensities in Soviet doctrine. It is doubtful that Soviet leaders intend to initiate war, and a near certainty that there would be no grass-roots support for initiating major conflict aimed at anything other than protection of the USSR from imminent attack. Certainly, those who base their judgment of Soviet willingness to initiate war on an assumed, perverse Soviet callousness about enormous loss of life are wrong. Such absurdities discredit, however, a legitimate Western concern, because it is not Soviet intent to use intercontinental nuclear war as a means to achieve some global political goal that really counts. It is the Soviet judgment that, if a major East-West war seems unavoidable for *whatever* reasons, the best way to fight and win is to be the first with the most effective attack.

There is a dangerous asymmetry in East-West perceptions on this score. Many Western military analysts seem obsessed with the *politics* of the nuclear balance and focus on how the war might *begin*. Soviet military strategists formulate their plans with a steady eye on how the war might *end*. One does not have to assume predatory Soviet intentions in either the intercontinental nuclear relationship or in the NATO-Warsaw Pact relationship to be concerned about potential Soviet preemption if war seems unavoidable. The danger is that Western leaders, in a crisis, might still be thinking in terms of deterrence when the Soviet leadership is calculating its moves in terms of warring and war-ending.<sup>15</sup>

There is a strong emphasis in Soviet thinking on the strategic defensive. This is an outgrowth of the notions that victory and survival must not be viewed as hopeless, even in the nuclear age. Tangible results are a highly publicized civil defense program and an entire service arm, the Troops of National Air Defense (*PVO strany*). Much of Soviet naval construction has been aimed at strategic defense.<sup>16</sup> It is no exaggeration to say that Soviet strategic force posture is based upon a "quadrad" instead of the "triad" notion that influences U.S. thinking. Strategic defensive measures are viewed by the Soviet citizenry as just as important as the three offensive "legs" of their intercontinental nuclear posture. This is deeply imbedded in the Soviet mindset. War does not happen "over there." Civil defense might be a feckless effort, and victory, even survival, might turn out to be meaningless in nuclear war, but twentieth-century history has taught that war more horrible than anything understood in the past can occur and be survived. The Com-

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munist Party leadership, its legitimacy closely connected with past military experience, would be thought negligent if it did not appear to be taking every defensive measure possible.

Once conflict begins, the Soviet perception of the conduct of war reflects very little appreciation of restraint. Regarding intercontinental nuclear attack forces, there has been open Soviet denision of U.S. concepts like "Limited Nuclear Options" and "Regional Nuclear Operations."<sup>17</sup> Such ideas simply do not fit into the Soviet view of fighting to win, once the conflict is unavoidable. "Bargaining" after hostilities have begun but before decisive blows have been struck does not make sense. From the Soviet point of view, these are dangerous attempts to prolong the political utility of nuclear weaponry past the point where warfighting concepts obviously dominate decision-making. It is dangerous because, though the Soviet side knows it does not accept the logic of minimum use of the decisive weaponry, the other superpower might be more willing to cross the nuclear threshold in a crisis if it were guided, or misguided, by the idea that nuclear force could be contained. The Soviets' own predilection for surprise and the initiative might thus come into play more often and at lower crisis levels. In believing that limited concepts of intercontinental nuclear war are destabilizing, Russians must fear their own predilections as well as those of the United States.

Similarly, Soviet decision-makers have difficulty in believing that NATO or the United States can constrain the use of nuclear weapons in the European theater once they are used. How could an adversary fail to exploit the weapon that will probably prove decisive, especially if he is inferior in other types of weaponry? Also, because the Russians live on the continent where so-called "tactical" nuclear weaponry is stored and would be deployed, they find it difficult to make the same crisp distinctions between theater nuclear weaponry and intercontinental nuclear weaponry that U.S. planners make. This, combined with the Soviet understanding that it would be hard for the United States to accept defeat in Europe and the loss of thousands of American soldiers without escalating the conflict, makes the Soviet military strategist skeptical about containing any major conflagration in Europe.

There have been some suggestions in the last decade that the Soviets may perceive a distinction between the conventional and nuclear phases of theater conflict. If true, it is not clear whether this is a result of the

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Soviet view of NATO decision-making machinery or of Soviet willingness to pause for a test of the U.S. nuclear guarantees to Europe during a phase where the Soviets, after all, would enjoy superiority on the ground that might well result in substantial gains before any stalemate. In any case, such a sign of restraint in Soviet policy for the conduct of war is atypical and, if encountered on the battlefield, should be viewed as extremely short-lived.

If there is to be bargaining and restraint once war has begun in Europe, it must come quickly and before the introduction of "weapons of mass destruction." Soviet strategists have taken care to equip their forces for nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare. At all levels, tactics and strategy are attuned to unrestrained warfare. The Soviet soldier is trained for and expects the worst from war. So does the Soviet population.

We have already touched on the familiar Soviet preference for massive forces. There is some truth to the simplistic explanation that mass ameliorates a sense of inferiority. If you can't make it well, make it big and make lots of it. In fact, mass can help to compensate for technological inferiority. Enormous "throw weight" can compensate for an adversary's MIRVs or your own poor accuracy. Forty thousand tanks with more on the way is one response to Western advances in antitank weapons. But there is more to the preference for size and numbers than a response to perceived technological inferiority. In the first place, technological lags in weaponry are never accepted as permanent features in the face of war. There are now Soviet MIRVs and antitank weapons. Second, mass, not sophistication, is the Soviet "style" of superiority. Nevertheless, the Soviets never surrender in the technological race, particularly insofar as nuclear missiles are concerned.<sup>18</sup>

Parity, essential equivalence, and rough balance are not natural elements in the Soviet view of war. Perhaps they can be imposed on some specific sectors of the military competition, but these concepts cannot be permitted to dictate the overall balance of military power with potential adversaries. Arms control is part of the broad global economic, political, and military competition. It may be, and probably is in the Soviet view, mutually advantageous to limit the competition in some facets of the nuclear arms race, but margins of advantage will continue to be sought. If clear-cut superiority in intercontinental nuclear weaponry could be had, either within the constraints of an agreement or

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outside such constraints, the Soviets would pay the economic and political prices to attain it. Whether or not clear-cut superiority in the nuclear relationship can be envisioned in the current era, it may be possible to attain it eventually in the broad combination of conventional and nuclear forces which constitute the totality of Soviet global military power. It is clearly possible on the Eurasian landmass.

If war must be fought, it will involve all types of forces and the totality of the nation's strength. Even if "weapons of mass destruction" are decisive in a war, they determine the outcome only as part of the broad context of the conflict. Timing, location, and the interrelationships between *all* the elements of a nation's power, especially its military power, will affect this context. There is a preoccupation in Soviet doctrine with the coordination of military forces and with the role of the masses in warfare.

Russians do not believe that war between East and West is inevitable. They would certainly prefer to compete without another global war, and feel that time is on their side in such competition. But theirs is a "big war" mentality. When conflict is contemplated, it is big enough for everyone.

Combined force operations must be tightly integrated and all types of forces must pull together to win. There are no one-and-one-half war notions or "flexible response" strategies which might serve as divisive elements between combat arms competing for resources. All forces are assigned vital missions aimed at attacking the adversary's forces and population and at dominating Eurasia. Soviet forces have indeed been used in "peacetime" in distant places at low levels of risk to the Soviet homeland, but their forces are built for the "big" war where missions are highly specific and well coordinated by centralized command and control.

Emphasis on the role of the masses is a carry-over from the prenuclear age. Even in nuclear war, in the Soviet view, there must be an enormous reserve of strength residing in the population. There is strong reliance on discipline, patriotism, and the maintenance of morale. These emphases are reminiscent of the "permanently operating factors" that Stalin chose to emphasize during the USSR's initial, indisputable nuclear inferiority. But even with the growing Soviet nuclear arsenal there is a persistent tendency to view war as requiring the active involvement of the entire population.<sup>20</sup> This strain in Soviet military thought, firmly

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rooted in history, is a source of strength for the Communist Party leadership and a potent source of support for Soviet military power. By manipulating the perceived danger of war in the population, the Party enhances its prestige and power. Because the need to be prepared is foremost in the Soviet citizen's mind, construction of Soviet military forces will continue to enjoy top priority.

### Summary

War is a country-wide preoccupation in the Soviet Union. Historical experience, a domestic political system heavily dependent upon the perception of external threat, and nuclear age geopolitics combine to make the threat of war and the need for massive military forces persistent realities for the ordinary Soviet citizen. World war, even in the nuclear age, is thinkable. It is contemplated often.

They intend to be prepared in every possible way to place the brunt of battle, with or without weapons of mass destruction, on the adversary. But Russians have lived on past battlefields and, though they will do their best to avoid it, they probably live on one of the main battlefields of the next major war. For them it is the battlefield on which the victor, if there is to be a victor, will be determined. War will probably be a global affair, but victory and survival have a distinct continental focus in the Russian mind.

The political implications of Soviet military power are understood and appreciated. New license for the projection of Soviet power and influence exists under the growing Soviet nuclear umbrella. This license is being carefully explored by a leadership mindful that security of the homeland must always enjoy top priority. There is also increasing latitude for productive political and economic accommodations with potential adversaries. This, in the Soviet view, is mostly because of Soviet military achievements.

But the *politics* of military power must never be allowed to interfere with the *requirements* for potential conflicts. Forces must be built for fighting and winning. Political influence can only, in the Soviet view, flow from forces designed to carry the day in combat.

The Soviets' perception of war in the nuclear age by no means concentrates on nuclear weaponry to the detriment of conventional forces. Nuclear weapons may be decisive but *all types* of forces, and a

militarized populace, will be required for any hope of survival and victory. A vast panoply of military power, constantly modernized and disposed to secure Soviet territory from "outside" threats, enjoys broad support in the Soviet Union.

The Soviets do not want war. They cannot, however, fail to note that expansion of military power has been their primary claim to superpower status. No observer of Soviet domestic and foreign politics should expect Soviet military power to diminish, but neither should he expect the USSR to deliberately initiate a major war. The security of the USSR far outweighs the goals that any nuclear-age Marxist-Leninist is likely to pursue.

Still, Soviet attitudes toward the conduct of war are unsettling. There is a clear preference for the initiative and the establishment and maintenance of a crushing offensive that, even divorced from Soviet intent to use war for political ends, is frightening in the nuclear age. In the face of massive and growing Soviet military power at all levels of conflict, and the probability that Soviet decision-makers would have little appreciation of restraint once conflict has begun, these preferences for the initiative and the offensive are more salient than the judgment that the Soviets do not want war.

## Notes

1. An example of keeping the horrors of war alive was the naming of two "hero-cities" in the 1970s. Novorossiysk (1973) and Tula (1977) received this award, called by Brezhnev "the highest award of the Motherland," for exploits in the war. See L.I. Brezhnev, "Vydayushchiysya Podvyyg Zashchitnikov Tuly" [The Remarkable Exploit of the Defenders of Tula] *Izvestia*, January 19, 1977.
2. See, for example, Ken Booth, "Soviet Defense Policy" in John Baylis et al, *Contemporary Strategy: Theories and Policies* (New York: Holmes and Meier, Inc., 1975), p. 219.
3. "The war provided a convincing demonstration of the mighty power of the Socialist state and political system" (emphasis in the original.) A.A. Grechko, Marshal of the Soviet Union and Soviet Minister of Defense, *Voo-ruchenniye Sili Sovetskogo Gosudarstva* [The Armed Forces of The Soviet State] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), p. 74.
4. Lenin is quoted in the following: "Everyone will agree that an army that does not train itself to master all arms, all means and methods of warfare that the enemy possesses, or may possess, is behaving in an unwise or even in a criminal manner." A. Lagovsky, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 25, 1969.

5. Brezhnev, in the article cited supra, states the Soviet response to Western charges of excessive Soviet defense spending without equivocation: "the allegations that the Soviet Union is exceeding what is sufficient for defense and is striving for weapons superiority with the aim of delivering 'the first strike' are absurd and totally unfounded."

6. For an extensive discussion of the various ways the Soviets categorize conflict, see Peter H. Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace and Neutrality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 25-58.

7. These classifications are cogently elaborated in Harriet Scott and William F. Scott, *The Armed Forces of the USSR* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 59-62.

8. The fact that Lenin accepted Clausewitz's basic dictum but that Marxism-Leninism's "views on the essence of war" differ in fundamental ways is discussed in *Marxism-Leninism on War and Army* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), pp. 16, 17.

9. It has become commonplace for Soviet commentators to point out that détente would not have been possible without the growth of Soviet military power.

10. The Soviet lexicon includes military doctrine, military science, military art, military strategy, operational art, and tactics. Military doctrine is defined as "a state's system of views and instructions on the nature of war under specific historical conditions, the definition of the military tasks of the State and the armed forces and the principles of their development, as well as the means and forms of solving all of these tasks, including armed combat, which stem from the war aims and the social-economic and military-technical resources of the country." S.N. Kozlov, *Spravochnik Ofitsera* [Officers Handbook] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1971), pp. 73-74.

11. In fact the military and the politicians are together on military construction and most issues in the USSR. Attempts to view civil-military conflict as significant and contentious are cases of mirror-imaging by Western analysts. This author agrees with the views of D.O. Graham, a retired lieutenant-general and former Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, presented in "Krem-lin Hawks and Doves: A Fallacious Notion," *The Washington Post*, May 29, 1977, p. A15.

12. The recent Annual Report by the U.S. Secretary of Defense recognizes the fact that Soviet forces grow consistently with the overall growth of the Soviet economy. It is noted that "nowhere is there any historical evidence that if we are restrained, the Soviets will reciprocate—except where specific and verifiable arms control agreements are negotiated." Harold Brown, *Department of Defense Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1980* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 25, 1979), p. 6.

13. "[I]n a modern war, as a consequence of the possible unrestricted use of

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strategic nuclear weapons by the armed forces of the warring sides, the line between the front and rear is obliterated." N.A. Lomov (ed.), *Nauchno-Tekhnicheskii Progress i Revoliutsiia v Voennoi Delo* [Scientific-Technical Progress and the Revolution in Military Affairs] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1973, translated and published under the auspices of the U.S. Air Force), p. 273.

14. A.A. Sidorenko, *Nastupleniye [The Offensive]* (Moscow: Voenizdat 1970, translated and published under the auspices of the U.S. Air Force), p. 41.

15. There is a Russian proverb that says "when cannons speak, politicians are silent." At some point in a crisis, perhaps when the judgment has been made that conflict cannot be avoided, the matter becomes one for the marshals. Wherever this point is, the Soviets make it clear that political notions take a back seat. Doctrine "recedes somewhat into the background, since armed conflict is guided mainly by military-political and military-strategic ideas, conclusions, and generalizations which flow from concrete conditions. Consequently war and armed struggle are directed not by doctrine, but by strategy." Kozlov, op. cit., p. 78.

16. "They [the Soviets] have a doctrine which considers nuclear war as thinkable and they are not only building their offensive forces, but are giving great attention to command and control, civil defense, air defense and all other elements needed to fight a nuclear war." David C. Jones, General, U.S. Air Force and Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *United States Military Posture For FY 1980* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979.) p. v.

17. An example of Soviet rejection of "limited" use of nuclear weapons is Lev Semeyko, "Formi Novye, Sut' Prezhnyaya" [New Forms, but the Same Content], *Krasnaya Zvezda* [Red Star], April 8, 1975.

18. "Everyone has seen that the real key to victory on the battlefields is in the hands of he who not only has new weapons but also has the lead in missile production." S.S. Biryuzov, Marshal of the Soviet Union, in P.M. Deriavyanko (ed.), *Problemy Revoliutsii v Voennoi Delo* [Problems of the Revolution in Military Affairs] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965, translated and published by the Joint Publications Research Service [JPRS 073096]), p. 4.

19. Stalin's "permanently operating factors" were: 1) The stability of the home front; 2) The morale of the forces; 3) The quality and quantity of divisions; 4) The quality and quantity of armament; and 5) The ability of commanders.

20. "We must always remember that, if a world nuclear missile war is unleashed by the imperialists, hundreds of millions of people will be dragged into its orbit. Victory in such a war will be attained not only by the operations of massive armed forces, but also by the vigorous activities of the people as a

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whole, who, in the final analysis, have the last word in matters of war and peace. One of the most important principles of modern warfare is the growth of the role of the general populace in it." M.P. Skirdo, *Narod, Armiya, Polkovodets* [The People, The Army, The Commander] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1970, translated and published under the auspices of the U.S. Air Force), p. 35.

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